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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

PRE-GENEVA CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS - VII

The Soviet reply to Western proposals on administrative arrangements: Moscow's reply of 17 March to the note delivered by Ambassador Bohlen on 5 March followed by less than twenty-four hours Secretary of State Dulles' press conference suggestion that Soviet stalling tactics might be related to Peiping's dissatisfaction with the Berlin agreement. On the following day, Pravda published an article ridiculing Mr. Dulles' "baseless deductions" and "peculiar logic." It denied any intention to delay the conference and rejected the suggestion that Moscow was having difficulties with Peiping over conference arrangements. Pravda recalled that "as far back as 3 March," the USSR had informed the Western governments that the Chinese People's Republic agrees to take part in the Geneva conference "together with the representatives of other great powers."

Peiping also responded, in even stronger terms, with the charge that Mr. Dulles' statement was "a barefaced attempt to stall the successful holding of the Geneva conference in contravention to the agreement reached at the Berlin conference." Pravda took up this charge on 22 March, asserting that "some leaders in the United States would not object if the Geneva conference did not take place at all."

There were two particularly significant points in the Soviet reply. First, it revealed Moscow's desire to avoid any impression that the Geneva conference will be held under United Nations auspices or in accordance with the UN recommendations concerning the composition of the Korean political conference embodied in the General Assembly's resolution of 28 August 1953. Second, the Soviet reply was designed to support an effort to inject the concept of a five power conference with a special, if not an equal, status for Communist China.

Regarding the first point, the Soviet note accepted the West's proposal that the conference be held in the Palais des Nations building but rejected the suggestion that the conference use United Nations Secretariat personnel to provide interpretation, documentation and translation services. Moscow countered with the suggestion that "the delegates themselves would assure the translation of documents received from other

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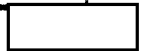
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delegates and the dissemination of their own documents in one of the official languages." Moscow agreed to use the system of simultaneous translation in the Palais des Nations but proposed an unwieldy and time-consuming method of interpretation more similar to that used at the Berlin conference than the usual United Nations procedure.

Moscow's desire to avoid the impression that the Geneva conference is in fact the political conference provided for by the Korean armistice agreement was also evident in the wording of the Soviet note. While the text of the Western note had referred to the "political conference in Geneva," the Soviet reply omitted the word "political" and referred only to "the calling of a conference in Geneva." A Peiping broadcast on 17 March also took note of this distinction by charging that Secretary Dulles "tries to reduce the conference to one between the two opposing sides in Korea."

With regard to the second point -- the effort to disguise the fact that the Berlin agreement fell far short of Molotov's original demand for a five power conference and the attempt to win equal, or at least special, status for China -- Moscow's reply stressed the fact that the Soviet views on the conference "were discussed with the Government of the Chinese People's Republic which has stated that it shares them." This reference to consultations with Peiping followed closely the wording of the Western note, delivered by Ambassador Bohlen on 5 March, which stated that the United States views had been discussed with the Governments of the United Kingdom and France and that they had expressed "their complete accord with these proposals."

In another effort to confer special or equal status on China, the Soviet note omitted any reference to consultations with the North Korean regime, despite the fact that it had received a Geneva invitation from Moscow at the same time as Peiping.

The note also suggested that Chinese be included as an official and working language of the conference, along with English, French and Russian. While there may be nothing particularly unusual about this request, in view of the fact that the Chinese are to participate in both the Korean and Indochina discussions, the omission of any reference to Korean, which was an official language at the Panmunjom negotiations, may have been calculated to give China a status superior to the other "invited," as opposed to sponsoring, countries.

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Finally, the Soviet note's suggestion that the French should be delegated to speak for the four powers in dealing with the UN Secretariat concerning the use of the Palais des Nations building, probably was designed to avoid the concept of the four sponsoring powers in order not to underline the absence of Communist China.

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[REDACTED] no reason to believe that the Soviet reply was delayed by differences between Moscow and Peiping over conference arrangements or that the USSR is deliberately seeking to postpone the conference. The exact timing of the reply probably was influenced by Secretary Dulles' remarks, but in any event, it seems likely that consultations with Peiping had been completed and that the note was about ready for delivery. There is nothing unusual in Soviet practice in the twelve-day interval between the receipt of the Western proposals and the Soviet reply.

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